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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 007659

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARN
DEPT ALSO FOR NP/ECC - P. VAN SONN, A. CHURCH, K. CROUCH
DEPT FOR EUR/ACE - D. MARTIN
CBP/INA FOR P. WARKER AND PROGAM MANAGER A. BACHELLER
DOC FOR PETERSEN-BEARD
PASS USDOE/NNSA FOR T. PERRY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/14/2014
TAGS: [ETTC](#) [MNUC](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [KSTC](#) [KNNP](#) [ETRD](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: JORDAN'S NEW BORDER TASK FORCE AIMS AT
FACILITATING TRADE

Classified By: CDA DAVID HALE. REASONS 1.5 (B,D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The GOJ cabinet approved a new inter-ministerial border management task force that will focus on facilitating trade and travel. The cabinet decision appointed National Customs as the lead agency in a task force comprising nine ministries and agencies. It is too soon to say whether the task force will be a plus for border cooperation, but its mission did not include security, which is a setback for our Export and Related Border Security (EXBS) Program. Embassy will encourage the task force to emphasize more inter-agency cooperation at the borders. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The cabinet August 10 approved a new border management task force. Finance minister Mohammed Abu Hammour, who oversees National Customs, proposed the measure.

According to a source in the Prime Minister's office, an August 12 written decision signed by the PM stated that National Customs would head the task force. The decision stated that the task force aims to "ease the passage of trade and people."

¶3. (SBU) The border task force comprises representatives of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Health, the General Intelligence Directorate (GID), the Public Security Directorate (PSD), the Jordan Armed Forces (JAF), the Jordan Institute of Standards and Metrology, the Ports Authority, and National Customs. Border functions in Jordan are shared among a surprisingly broad array of agencies. For example, even the Health Ministry has limited frontier responsibilities, testing imports of medicines, grains and other commodities, as well as processed foods.

¶4. (C) Security is noticeably absent from the task force's goals, despite the presence on the task force of GID, PSD, and the JAF. The three agencies deploy intelligence and enforcement resources along all of Jordan's borders (not just legal crossings) to detect and deter trans-national smuggling and illicit acts, including terrorist activities. The cabinet rejected a key proposal of the Finance Minister: that the Prime Minister appoint a chairman from outside the concerned agencies who would report to the Prime Minister.

¶5. (SBU) USAID's Economic Opportunities unit masterminded the idea of an inter-ministerial border committee and has promoted it among the respective agencies since last January. The resulting task force -- with cabinet approval -- should now lead to some greater cooperation at the borders regarding trade matters and passenger handling. It is too early to tell whether this initiative will lead to improvements at the frontiers; agencies are just lining up their candidates for task force membership and the committee will likely take until the end of the year to get up and running.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: USAID's task was considerable in bringing about even this limited level of cooperation in a government notorious for bureaucratic in-fighting. While we will encourage the task force to focus on improved liaison among security agencies, it is more likely to serve as a sounding board and information gathering tool for those agencies. The Jordan Armed Forces Directorate of Military Intelligence, the GID, and the PSD Borders Administration have relied on working relationships at the center based on a top-down approach to deal with serious border security issues.

¶7. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
HALE